

2-26-1998

Law School Deans Criticize Rankings

Jennifer Paynter
Indiana Daily Student

Follow this and additional works at: <http://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/robel>



Part of the [Legal Biography Commons](#), [Legal Education Commons](#), and the [Legal Profession Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Paynter, Jennifer, "Law School Deans Criticize Rankings" (1998). *Lauren Robel (2002 Acting; 2003-2011)*. Paper 18.
<http://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/robel/18>

This Misc. Materials related to Dean Lauren Robel is brought to you for free and open access by the Law School Deans at Digital Repository @ Maurer Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in Lauren Robel (2002 Acting; 2003-2011) by an authorized administrator of Digital Repository @ Maurer Law. For more information, please contact wattn@indiana.edu.



JEROME HALL LAW LIBRARY

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
Maurer School of Law
Bloomington

Law school deans criticize rankings

■ IU joins in protest against inaccurate, incomplete system

JENNIFER PAYNTER
Indiana Daily Student

Monday, *U.S. News and World Report's* "1998 Guide to America's Best Graduate Schools" hit newsstands and has since garnered considerable controversy.

The dean of IU School of Law and the deans of 163 other law schools think the magazine's ranking system is bunk.

School of Law acting dean Lauren Robel said the school feels the ranking system is flawed and wants to eventually see the rankings discontinued.

In the fall, the School of Law and 163 deans from other law schools co-signed a letter with the Law School Admission Council. The letter was mailed to potential 1998 law school applicants — about 70,000 students — urging them to look beyond rankings when choosing a school.

"The law school is not protesting its rank," Robel said. "It's not that they think we're terrible. We did rank 37th. It's just that there are so many factors that go into it that they don't take into account."

After analyzing the data, Robel and others found several problems, such as inconsistency.

"We figured out a few years ago that schools could move up to 40 points within a year," Robel said. "It is so implausible that a school could move that far. People don't bounce around that much within a year. Common sense tells you that it is impossible."

School of Law professor Jeff Stake took action during the spring of 1997 to find the problems within the

► PAGE 8 • THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1998 • IDS

► CONTINUED FROM FRONT

RANKINGS: Law professors complain of inaccuracies

U.S. News and World Report ranking policies.

"Originally, (IU law professor) Joe Hoffmann and I got the data that *U.S. News and World Report* uses to do their rankings for last year and attempted to replicate the results," Stake said. "We discovered that they were doing screwy things. After the data was taken to the AALS, they took our research to a private statistician."

Robel said there are more important factors that students need to consider when choosing a law school. She said they should consider the student/teacher ratio within the school, the reputation of the faculty, faculty accessibility and law school facilities. She said students could also consider opportunities for graduates, placement rates and the bar passage percentage.

A Feb. 20 press release from *U.S. News and World Report* stated the rankings are useful to students. Because of the cost of a graduate education, students need all the information possible to help

make the most informed decision about where to go to school and what discipline to pursue, according to the press release.

But according to *U.S. News and World Report*, the rankings should be used in conjunction with other factors, such as academic and professional ambitions, financial resources, school size and location.

Despite the controversy concerning law school rankings, some law school students didn't use a ranking system when selecting a graduate program.

First-year law student Erin Boen said rankings were not the most important factor for her.

"The idea that IU is a good law school was more important than it's ranking," Boen said. "There is not as much pressure to compete at IU. People respect your desire to learn."

First-year law school student Kristen Smith agreed. She said she took rankings into consideration, but they were not her deciding factor.

Robel said she does not know

The Top 10 Law Schools as Ranked by *U.S. News and World Report*

1. Yale University
2. Harvard University
3. Stanford University
4. Columbia University
5. University of Chicago
6. New York University
7. University of California-Berkeley
8. Duke University
8. University of Michigan-Ann Arbor
8. University of Pennsylvania
37. IU

INDIANA DAILY STUDENT

how the magazine ranks other graduate disciplines, but she believes the law school rankings are inaccurate.

"We're just absolutely convinced it's baloney," Robel said. "We don't want students to continue to be misled by a study that has no methodological validity."